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Introduction

New academic members of staff at the University of Glasgow are required to complete a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP), the New Lecturer and Teacher Programme (NLTP), accredited by the Higher Education Academy since 2002. Following an internal review, the University of Glasgow's PGCAP was redesigned in 2008 (Fig 1), taking account of participants' feedback that *while they valued the sharing of practices across disciplines, they believed that some of the content of the old PGCAP lacked relevance to their own disciplinary contexts*. These views mirrored the ongoing discussion in Higher Education about the tensions between teaching and learning issues seen as distinct to particular disciplines and the developing requirement for more complex, trans-disciplinary graduate outcomes (Kreber, 2009). Thus, the two year programme has been restructured into two distinct courses: the first is a generic course providing a grounding in learning and teaching delivered to mixed disciplinary groups and the second looks at certain themes in more depth and is delivered to three disciplinary streams: Arts, Education and Social Sciences; the Clinical subjects; and the Sciences and Engineering, to mirror the institution's current Faculty structure.

Three members of academic staff were seconded, on a part-time basis, to act as Academic Development Fellows (ADFs) for the duration of the 09/10 academic year (Fig 2). The role of the ADFs has been to inform the design and development of two key sessions of the second year of the NLTP; to co-design and deliver these with existing ADU staff; to identify areas of academic development relevant to the needs of the faculties they represent and thus inform the LTC's enhanced Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provision; and to develop sustainable discipline specific resources relevant both to the NLTP and to the University community more generally. In addition to the provision of a more relevant and credible NLTP and the enhancement and extension of centrally delivered CPD provision, the project will result in three academics gaining valuable experience of academic development, particularly in the areas of assessment and curriculum design; they will be able to take this expertise back to their own faculties and relevant cognate areas.

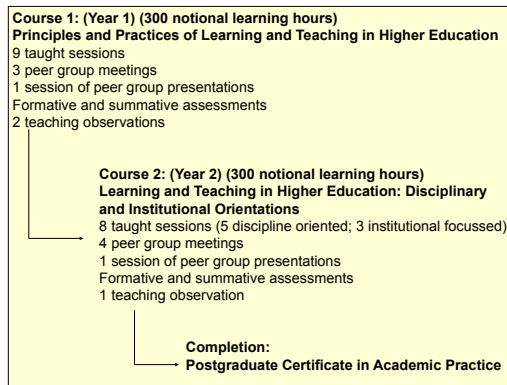


Figure 1: Overview of NLTP Programme

Results to date

The three Academic Development Fellows meet on a weekly basis with the ADU staff to discuss present and future projects. The ADFs, acting as 'the voice of experience' in terms of institutional and disciplinary practices, have delivered their first session on assessment to the second year NLTP participants. The feedback from these sessions was very positive; the participants stated that keeping the sessions discipline specific is much more relevant to their teaching. The second session on curriculum design will be delivered later this year. The ADFs have also met with the HEA subject heads in their disciplines to discuss their views of the old and new NLTP courses and their relevance. The results of these discussions will be used to improve the new NLTP further. The ADFs are currently identifying and developing key resources and activities to add to the NLTP's Year 2 Moodle site. They are contributing to the development of a new strand in the Good Practice Resources on the LTC website: Teaching in the Disciplines. They have submitted several abstracts to various higher education conferences and are co-authoring a paper outlining the outcomes of the project and thus will contribute to the literature on discipline-specific academic development.

Surveys from the present NLTP participants have revealed that they find the discipline-specific part of the NLTP more relevant to their teaching. However, they also state that they continue to enjoy meeting with their cross-discipline peer groups. Preliminary results of the ADFs' research have revealed that a lot of teaching is similar across disciplines, as supported by Young (2010). It has also identified that there are types of teaching specific to disciplines, such as laboratories, practicals, observation and topics supported by governing bodies that are specific to certain disciplines such as professionalism in the clinical subjects. The ADFs are conducting research into this area.



Figure 2: The Academic Development Fellows

Conclusions

The perception that all teaching issues are discipline-specific is commonly accepted. Discussions with the NLTP participants, HEA subject heads, ADU staff and performing literature searches has brought this view into question; however, there is also still a perceived value in small groups of academics from similar disciplines discussing learning and teaching in depth. The generic first year of the NLTP course covers subjects that apply to most disciplines. The discipline-specific second year is being developed to cover the topics relevant to each discipline. In-depth investigation and careful mapping of teaching and learning issues across the disciplines is necessary to elucidate the value of both generic and discipline-specific teaching methods within the NLTP.

References

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Young, P. (2010). Generic or discipline-specific? An exploration of the significance of discipline-specific issues in researching and developing teaching and learning in higher education. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*. Vol. 47, No.1, 115-124.